

amount of meat each dog gorges (2.5-3.5 kg) while feeding on a full grown chital or a big sambar fawn. So tolerating a prey species to walk around and allowing it to eat at the kill particularly when the kill was insufficient for all members are worth recording. In the same area on 9.vii.77 Keechanna, my tribal assistant, saw a chital stag in velvet spikes being killed by the pack. He waited till the dogs finished eating and when he was about to go to the kill remains to weigh them and collect the lower jaw, he saw a wild boar making its way through the scrub towards the kill. The dogs returning from the kill circled around the boar for some time and then moved away. These observations may suggest that once the 'killing or hunting effort' of the wild dog was over the prey animals may be immune to the wild dogs' predation for quite some time.

Earlier reports record jackals and Hyenas being ignored (Davidar 1975) probably by the

existence of a 'blood-brotherhood bar' as Brander (1931) puts it. R. C. Morris (as reported in Burton 1940) has observed a pack of wild dogs, obviously well-fed, lying about on a grass hill-top while sambar walked, tails stiffly erect, right up to them. Apart from eyeing the deer lazily the dogs did not stir. On the evening of 2.viii.77 I saw an alarmed yearling sambar doe walk past through a single file of 4 dogs, part of the pack of 15, which 10 minutes later killed a prime adult chital doe. Earlier that day in the morning the pack had killed a prime adult chital stag with 38 cm long hard antlers but tribals took away the kill before the dogs could consume it fully. The pack, being 15 in number, was sufficiently strong to kill the sambar. Yet they preferred and killed a smaller possibly an already weakened animal. All these indicate that wild dogs though they have the courage and capacity are not wanton killers.

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6. BIRD MIGRATION ACROSS THE HIMALAYAS

It would be an interesting and instructive exercise to have a collection made of all bird migration records across the Himalayas. We may possibly gain considerable insight into the role of the Himalayas as a barrier or otherwise to birds winging their way to and from temperate Asia.

Here are two observations by myself which might be worth recording:

In the summer of 1968, I was crossing the Rohtang Pass at the head of the Kulu Valley (32/30°N, 72°E). May tends to be rather an unsettled month with sudden thunder storms gathering up on the snowy mountains. On the

morning of 24th May, we had started up for the pass in clear weather but by 3 p.m., the time we approached the crest of the pass, clouds had gathered and it began to snow. As we were plodding along the level top of the pass I heard a swish of wings and low over me a flock of more than a score of Swifts *Apus apus* swept out of the vapours from the Kulu side and rushed on barely a few feet above the snow on into Lahoul.

Again, in May of 1972,—unfortunately I do not have the exact date but it was in the third week—we had experienced foul weather for several days. I was walking up the Solang Nulla when a group of trainees from the Manali Mountaineering Institute met me on their way down. I was asked to identify a

duck they had rescued on the scree near their base camp at app. 3350 metres at Bias Kund. It turned out to be a duck of the Common Teal *Anas crecca*. She had apparently been forced down by the storm as she, perhaps, with others of a flock was attempting to cross the Rohtang range. Though her flight feathers were badly worn, she looked in good shape. On my return to Manali I made enquiries about her fate but failed to gain any information. It is likely her migration ended in a duck curry.

The Kulu Valley has a north-south trend and at its head is the magnificent Rohtang range. The Rohtang Pass 3960 metres is the lowest part of the spectacular divide.

C/o. WWF-INDIA,
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February 17, 1977.

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7. A BUZZARD NEST IN LADAKH

Besides the not wholly unexpected small numbers of the Tibetan Crane that we saw in Ladakh, what struck the members of the World Wildlife Fund sponsored BNHS expedition to Ladakh in June-July 1976, was the comparative scarcity of birds of prey. An occasional European Kestrel and two sightings of Lammergeier were all there was to report till we reached the banks of the Indus at Dungi. Here, on the grassy banks we saw our first long-legged buzzard (*Buteo rufinus rufinus*). We met it again and again in the Hanlé Valley, in Hanlé village and in Puga which prompted Dr. Sálím Ali to quip that the bird was probably waiting for the writer's carcass!

In Puga (height 4880 m) we sighted not a loner but a pair of long-legged buzzard and

it was not long before their nest was located, quite close to our camp on the ledge of a cliff. The nest was at a height of about 50 metres from the ground. The ledge on which it was built was quite inaccessible, there being big rocky overhangs just below and above it. The nest faced south while on the opposite side the ledge narrowed into a crevice in the rock that afforded a cool retreat to the birds from the heat of the sun. The nest was made up of Caragana twigs, grass tufts, cotton and wool rags, plastic-coated cable and pieces of manila rope, a liberal supply of man-made items being available in the Geological Survey camp down below.

As there was no place to put up a blind near the nest, we watched it from a convenient look-out ledge in the open, at a distance of